

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PER-01 SIG-01 A-01
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FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3083
INFO USCINCEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 MUSCAT 0502

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
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SUBJECT: PARM - ANNUAL POLICY AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENT - PART I

REF: BP 00015; STATE 038356

A. U.S. INTERESTS. I WOULD SUMMARIZE OUR LONG-TERM INTERESTS IN OMAN AS (1) TO ASSURE THAT OMAN DOES NOT USE ITS SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ TO INTERFERE WITH THE VITAL PASSAGE OF OIL TANKERS BETWEEN THE PERSIAN GULF AND THE GULF OF OMAN, AND (2) TO SEE THAT A MODERATELY-INCLINED GOVERNMENT, WITH WHICH WE CAN COOPERATE BENEFICIALLY IN VARIOUS SPHERES, CONTINUES TO PREVAIL. EVENTS AND ATTITUDES IN OMAN WILL REMAIN OF RELATIVELY LITTLE CONSEQUENCE TO THE MAJOR U.S. CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN THE S/P AND NEA TRENDS PAPERS.

1. SAFETY OF OIL PASSAGE THROUGH HORMUZ. FORTUNATELY OMAN ENJOYS EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH IRAN, WHICH CONTROLS THE NORTHERN SIDE OF HORMUZ, AND ALSO SHARES MANY COMMON INTERESTS WITH OTHER GULF OIL EXPORTERS SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT AND ABU DHABI. IN PRACTICAL TERMS IT IS LIKELY THAT IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA
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WOULD TAKE STEPS (IRAN BY FORCE AND SAUDI ARABIA BY DIPLOMACY) TO PREVENT EMERGENCE OF A RADICAL REGIME IN MUSCAT, AND CERTAINLY TO PREVENT BLOCKAGE OF HORMUZ. NONETHELESS, INTERFERENCE WITH SHIPPING FROM THE MUSANDAM (OMANI) SIDE OF THE STRAITS IS CONCEIVABLE, PHYSICALLY, AND OUR FIRST LONG-TERM INTEREST IN THIS COUNTRY IS TO PREVENT THAT.

2. CONTINUED RULE BY A FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT. OMAN IS CURRENTLY ENJOYING THE GREATEST PROSPERITY IN ITS HISTORY UNDER THE CLOSE WATCH BUT LAISSEZ FAIRE POLICIES OF A STAUNCHLY PRO-

WESTERN, ANTI-COMMUNIST ABSOLUTE MONARCHY. THE REGIME POSSESSES STRONG HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS, LEGITIMACY IN THE EYES OF THE OMANI PEOPLE, AND EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER INTERNAL SECURITY AND ACCESS TO ITS TERRITORY. OMAN'S LIMITED OIL RESOURCES ARE ADEQUATE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO PRESERVE ITS POWER PROVIDED ERRORS AND EXCESSES CAN BE KEPT WITHIN BOUNDS. THE GOVERNMENT TAKES PRIDE, AND PROPERLY SO, IN HAVING DEFEATED MILITARILY THE PROTRACTED COMMUNIST-SUPPORTED DHOFAR INSURGENCY A YEAR AGO, AND IN RATHER STUMBLING FASHION IS TRYING TO CONSOLIDATE THAT VICTORY THROUGH ECONOMIC MEASURES. WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THIS, THOUGH OUR ASSETS ARE MEAGER AND PERFORM OUR ROLE IS LIMITED.

B. OVERVIEW. SEVERAL SITUATIONS EITHER ALREADY PRESENT OR ON THE 1977-79 HORIZON DESERVE WATCHING. THESE FACTORS, SINGLY OR IN VARIOUS COMBINATIONS, COULD COME TO IMPINGE ON THE COUNTRY'S STABILITY OR ERODE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR ITS PRESENT LEADERSHIP.

1. THE GRADUALLY DECLINING LEVEL OF OIL PRODUCTION. UNLESS THE EFFECT IS OFFSET BY ADDITIONAL PRICE INCREASES, OMAN'S OIL REVENUES WILL GO INTO A SLIGHT DECLINE THIS YEAR. PROSPECTS FOR NEW DISCOVERIES ARE FAIR AT BEST. AS ALL MODERNIZATION HERE DEPENDS ON OIL RECEIPTS, OMAN SHOULD BE HUSBANDING ITS EXISTING FUNDS AND BE MORE DISCRIMINATING IN APPLYING THEM TO TASKS AT HAND. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT HAS
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PROMULGATED ITS FIRST DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND HAS MOVED WITH SOME SKILL TO SET SPENDING PRIORITIES, IT IS ONLY BEGINNING TO FACE THE HARD CHOICES BETWEEN CIVIL AND MILITARY EXPENDITURE. ALSO, THE GENERAL PUBLIC HAS NOT YET COME TO APPRECIATE THAT BEFORE LONG BELTS MAY HAVE TO BE TIGHTENED. SPARKS MAY FLY WHEN THE POPULAR ATTITUDE THAT GOOD TIMES ARE HERE TO STAY RUNS UP AGAINST THE COLD REALITY THAT THE BLACK GOLD WHICH HAS BEEN PROPELLING OMAN'S AMAZING POST-1970 RESURGENCE MAY BE GONE IN 20 YEARS.

2. THE ACCELERATING EMERGENCE FROM BRITISH MILITARY DOMINATION. THE LONG RAF PRESENCE AT MASIRAH AND SALALAH AIRFIELDS ENDS THIS WEEK. SIMULTANEOUSLY, ALTERATIONS IN THE SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES (SAF) COMMAND STRUCTURE WILL FURTHER DILUTE BRITISH INFLUENCE OVER SAF ADMINISTRATION AND TRAINING WHILE BOOSTING OMANIZATION. THOUGH AROUND 180 SECONDED BRITISH OFFICERS WILL REMAIN IN PLACE, SOME IN TOP COMMAND POSTS, THE GROWING TURNOVER OF OFFICERS FROM TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS AND THE ANTICIPATED PROMOTION OF THE FIRST OMANI OFFICERS TO FULL COLONEL OR GENERAL OFFICER RANK NEXT YEAR WILL ACCELERATE THE TREND. SO QUITE A DIFFERENT FORCE COMPLEXION, EXCEPT IN THE AIR FORCE AND NAVY, WILL RESULT BY 1980. IT IS FROM OMANI MILITARY OFFICER RANKS THAT A THREAT TO SULTAN QABOOS' RULE IS MOST LIKELY TO COME, IF AT ALL. IT BEHOOVES US,

THEREFORE, TO INCREASE OUR CONTACTS WITH THOSE RANKS, BUT WE SHOULD AVOID BILATERAL MILITARY TIES WHICH HOLD NO ADVANTAGE FOR US AND/OR MIGHT SIMPLY BE UNNECESSARY FOR OMAN. WE WOULD BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT INCREASING SUBSTANTIALLY OUR BILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION WITH OMAN, DESPITE ANTICIPATED PRESSURES IN THAT DIRECTION. YET THERE ARE WORTHWHILE THINGS FOR US TO DO ON THE TRAINING SIDE, STRICTLY AS A SUPPLEMENT TO WHAT BRITAIN STILL APPEARS VERY WILLING TO CONTINUE.

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3. THE CONTINUING HANDICAP OF A SLUGGISH AND OVERLY PROTECTED RULER. THOUGH IN MY JUDGMENT HE RETAINS THE SUPPORT OF HIS PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE ARMED FORCES, SULTAN QABOOS IS STILL GOVERNING INACTIVELY. HE LIMITS HIS APPOINTMENTS SEVERELY, RESTRICTS HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES TO A MINIMUM CHIEFLY CEREMONIAL OR MILITARY IN NATURE, AND ISOLATES HIMSELF FROM MANY OF HIS OWN TOP APPOINTEES. RARELY DOES HE PUT IN A DECENT DAY'S WORK. HE SPENDS 60 PERCENT OF HIS TIME IN DHOFAR - WHERE ONLY 10 PERCENT OF HIS SUBJECTS RESIDE OR HAVE EVER BEEN - AND DOES NOT GET AROUND THE COUNTRY TO SEE AND BE SEEN. MAJOR POLICY AND CONTRACT DECISIONS CONTINUE TO BEAR THE IMPRINT OF A SELECT GROUP OF ADVISORS, SOME NON-OMANI WITHOUT FORMAL OFFICE AND EVEN RESIDENT ABROAD. DISILLUSIONMENT WITH QABOOD COULD COME AS THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR WIDENS AND IF PALACE EXPENDITURES CONTINUE TO MOUNT EVEN AS GENERAL PROSPERITY DECLINES.

4. AMONG EXTERNAL FACTORS, OMANI LEADERS WILL BE LOOKING TO DETECT ANY CHANGES IN THE BALANCE OF U.S./SOVIET NAVAL ACTIVITIES IN NORTHWEST INDIAN OCEAN REGION, AND MAY BECOME ANXIOUS TO INVOLVE THE U.S. IN ADDITIONAL FORMS OF SECURITY COOPERATION. HARD EXPERIENCE WITH PFLO/PDRY LEFT QABOOS AND HIS COLLEAGUES WITH DISTRUST FOR THAT REGIME AND ALL OTHERS
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INFLUENCED BY THE SOVIETS AND THEIR ILK. THEY SENSE THAT OMAN'S GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION MUST MAKE IT A TEMPTING TARGET FOR AGGRESSIVE COMMUNISM, AND WORRY ABOUT THEIR THOUSAND-MILE COASTLINE WHICH RENDERS ADEQUATE DEFENSE COMPLICATED. THEY WILL BE APPREHENSIVE IN EVENT OF MOVES TOWARD AMERICAN/SOVIET ACCOMMODATION IN THE SEAS AROUND THEM, FEARING THE RUSSIANS BY SOME DEVIOUS TACTICS WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS AT THE EXPENSE OF SMALL STATES LIKE OMAN. THE OMANI GOVERNMENT MAY SEEK TO EXPAND SECURITY COOPERATION WITH US, AND SECURE TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR THEIR DEFENSE, IN THE COMING PERIOD. SUCH PRESSURE MAY DEVELOP DURING NEGOTIATIONS RECENTLY BEGUN FOR OUR FUTURE USE OF STRATEGICALLY LOCATED MASIRAH ISLAND. SHOULD WE SEEK ACTIVE COOPERATION FROM THE OMANIS TO HELP KEEP MIDEASTFOR IN REGIONAL WATERS, I EXPECT THEY WILL BE EAGER TO DO BUSINESS. WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO LET THIS PROCESS GO TOO FAR FOR THE OMANIS' OWN POLITICAL GOOD, AS WELL AS ASSESSING OUR OWN NEEDS VERY REALISTICALLY.

C. OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION. AS I SEE IT, WHAT THE U.S. SHOULD AIM TO ACCOMPLISH IN OMAN CAN BE GROUPED INTO SIX CATEGORIES. SEVERAL OF THESE OBJECTIVES ARE EXPLICITLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE MAIN S/P AND NEA POLICY PREOCCUPATIONS OUTLINED IN REFTELS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE NEED TO MAINTAIN ASSURED ACCESS TO OIL SUPPLIES WILL BE FURTHERED BY OBJECTIVE NO. 1. BELOW. THE NEED TO BUILD UP U.S. EXPORT MARKETS WILL BE ADVANCED BY NOS. 3 AND 4. THE REQUIREMENT TO IMPROVE OUR MONITORING OF NEA HOST COUNTRY ACTIVITIES IN MULTILATERAL GATHERINGS PERTINENT TO "NORTH-SOUTH" ISSUES WILL BE ENHANCED AS WE WORK TOWARD OBJECTIVES NO. 2 AND 6 (THOUGH IN ALL HONESTY OMAN'S PARTICIPATION IN MOST SUCH GATHERINGS, AND IN ARAB LEAGUE AFFAIRS, HAS LITTLE SUBSTANCE). THE GOAL OF REDUCING ARMS TRANSFERS MAY GAIN A SMALL ASSIST IF WE ARE EFFECTIVE IN OBJECTIVE NO. 5. AND, WHILE BECAUSE OF GEOGRAPHIC REMOTENESS FROM PALESTINE AND PHYSICAL ABSENCE OF A SIGNIFICANT PALESTINIAN ELEMENT IN ITS POPULATION OMAN HAS A LOWER ATTENTION SPAN FOR THE ARAB-ISRAEL ISSUE THAN ANY COUNTRY

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IN ARABIA, THE PRIORITY U. . OBJECTIVE OF A MIDEAST PEACE MAY BE ADVANCED marginally AS WE GAIN GROUND TOWARD THE FIRST THREE OBJECTIVES BELOW.

OUR PROPOSED COURSES OF ACTION ARE PLACED UNDER THE OBJECTIVE THEY ARE DESIGNED TO SERVE. A STEADY LEVEL OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES WILL BE ESSENTIAL IF APPRECIABLE HEADWAY IS TO BE MADE. BY NECESSITY, OUR LISTING OMITTS ALL SORTS OF IMPORTANT, TIME-CONSUMING EMBASSY ACTIVITIES SUCH AS STANDARD REPORTING, RESPONSES TO AD HOC REQUIREMENTS, CARE AND FEEDING OF OFFICIAL VISITORS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND CONSULAR SERVICES THAT DO NOT LEND THEMSELVES TO SUBSTANTIVE, GOAL-ORIENTED DESCRIPTION BUT ARE HEAVY BURDENS ON OUR SMALL STAFF.

1. MAINTENANCE OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS IN A STABLE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE.

A. CULTIVATE THOSE FEW IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL CIVILIAN LEADERS WITH WHOM WE STILL HAVE ONLY NODDING ACQUAINTANCE, AND SELECTED ADDITIONAL OMANI MILITARY OFFICERS AS WELL.

B. CONTINUE PROVIDING GOVERNMENT LEADERS TIMELY INFORMATION REGARDING PENINSULA/GULF/INDIAN OCEAN POLITICAL AND SECURITY AFFAIRS, BUT NOT OVERLOAD THEM OR PROVIDE MATERIAL ON FAR-AWAY PROBLEMS, WHICH WOULD ONLY TURN OFF THEIR ENTIRE ATTENTION.

C. ENCOURAGE LIAISON BETWEEN MUSCAT AND TEHRAN FOR DEFENSE OF STRAITS OF HORMUZ, WITH MAIN RESPONSIBILITY TO IRANIANS BECAUSE OF THEIR GREATER CAPABILITY.

D. ENCOURAGE CLOSE COOPERATION WITH SAUDI ARABIA ON NEARLY ALL REGIONAL MATTERS.

E. INITIATE GREATER CONTACT WITH LOCAL PRESS, NOW THAT ALL PAPERS AND MAGAZINES ARE BEING PRINTED INSIDE OMAN AND ARE BEING KEPT FAIRLY CURRENT, AND BEGIN PLACEMENT OF USIS ARTICLES
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AND PHOTOGRAPHS. THIS TIES IN WELL WITH ANTICIPATED DIRECT RECEIPT OF DAILY WIRELESS FILE BY LATE 1977.

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2. DEVELOPMENT OF MORE COMPETENT OMANI LEADERS.

A. CONTINUE USING USIS AND CU PROGRAMS TO CULTIVATE PROMISING OMANIS. (OF SPECIAL UTILITY HERE ARE IV GRANTS, MATERIALS FOR OMAN TV AND RADIO, BOOK PRESENTATIONS AND OCCASIONAL CULTURAL PROGRAMS.)

B. GAIN MORE KNOWLEDGE OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S FOREIGN STUDENT PROGRAM IN U.S. SO AS TO STEER IT AWAY FROM DIFFICULTY IF NEED BE. (AFME HAS PRIME RESPONSIBILITY BUT MINISTRY MAY ASSUME THE TASK DIRECTLY BEFORE IT HAS THE CAPABILITY.)

C. AVOID, DISCREETLY, ASSOCIATING THE EMBASSY WITH ELEMENTS KNOWN TO BE CORRUPT OR WITH PROJECTS THAT MIGHT TARNISH OUR IMAGE WITH THE COUNTRY'S POTENTIAL LEADERS.

3. ENCOURAGEMENT OF PROPER ATTENTION TO BALANCED SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRESS BENEFITTING ALL REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.

A. BUILD PRESENT 27 VOLUNTEER PEACE CORPS LEVEL TO 35-40 RANGE, BROADENING THE MIX OF SKILLS TO INCLUDE SOME PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE WHILE CONTINUING PRESENT FOCUS ON HEALTH FIELD AND, SECONDARILY, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING.

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B. SUPPORT STRONGLY THE EXISTING FAA REIMBURSABLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, AND FOLLOW THROUGH WITH SIMILAR PLANNED EFFORTS IN AGRICULTURE AND FISHING IN COOPERATION WITH AID.

C. BACK APPROPRIATE OMAN PROGRAM ACTIVITY, AND OPPOSE THE IN-APPROPRIATE, IN UN AGENCIES AND THE IBRD.

D. TACTFULLY DISCOURAGE OMAN FROM UNDERTAKING PROJECTS OF DUBIOUS FEASIBILITY, ESPECIALLY THOSE UNHELPFUL TO ITS OWN MAIN GOAL OF ESTABLISHING A REVENUE-EARNING, NON-OIL BASE.

4. EXPANSION OF TRADE AND OTHER FORMS OF PRIVATE SECTOR TIES.

A. CONTINUE AGGRESSIVE COMMERCIAL PROMOTION: TRADE OPPORTUNITY REPORTING, ASSISTING VISITING BUSINESSMEN AND BANKERS, FOLLOWING UP GOVERNMENT TENDERS, HELPING LOCAL IMPORTERS, ETC.

B. ASSIST AND CONSULT WITH U.S. FIRMS ALREADY ESTABLISHED IN OMAN TO FOSTER SHARING OF EXPERIENCE WITH LOCAL PROBLEMS FOR BENEFIT OF ALL. THIS INCLUDES CONTINUATION OF INFORMAL GROUP MEETINGS WITH U.S. BUSINESSMEN INITIATED IN 1976.

C. PROMOTE FURTHER INVESTIGATION OF OMANI MARKET BY U.S. PRIVATE INDUSTRY AND CONSTRUCTION FIRMS, POINTING TO 1976 OPIC AGREEMENT AS ONE ENCOURAGING FACTOR.

D. PROCEED WITH SCHEDULED USDOC TRADE PROMOTION EVENTS (ONE TRADE MISSION AND ONE SALES SEMINAR ARE DUE NEXT WINTER) AND USE EXPERIENCE GAINED FROM THEM AND FROM AN EARLIER CATALOGUE SHOW TO DEVELOP A REALISTIC SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR FY-79.

E. PERSIST WITH LOCAL DIALOGUE ON ARAB BOYCOTT, AIMING TO RELAX OMANI PRACTICES.

5. FOSTERING OF A SENSIBLE, AFFORDABLE OMANI DEFENSE POSTURE

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THAT CONTINUES TO LOOK MAINLY TO BRITAIN RATHER THAN TO US FOR ADVICE AND HARDWARE.

A. REVIEW SYMPATHETICALLY FMS REQUESTS, ESPECIALLY FOLLOW-ON CASES ON ITEMS ALREADY SOLD AND THOSE INVOLVING TRAINING, BUT APPROVE ONLY THOSE THAT MEET REAL MILITARY NEEDS. ALSO FACILITATE SENSIBLE REQUESTS MADE BY OMAN THROUGH COMMERCIAL CHANNELS.

B. SEEK TO SEND AN OMANI MILITARY LEADER TO U.S. ON DEFENSE VISITORS PROGRAM BY FY-79.

C. NEGOTIATE CONTINUED ACCESS BY U.S. NAVY RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT, AND OCCASIONAL LOGISTIC FLIGHTS, TO MASIRAH FOR REFUELING/REST VISITS. (SHOULD OTHER U.S. USES OF THE ISLAND BE PROPOSED, WE SHOULD WEIGH THE BENEFITS MOST CAREFULLY AGAINST POSSIBLE COSTS TO OUR COUNTRY OBJECTIVES. EVEN THE MODEST LANDING RIGHTS OUR NAVAL AIRCRAFT HAS BEEN ENJOYING AT MASIRAH HAVE LITTLE DIRECT ADVANTAGE TO US-OMAN RELATIONS PER SE, BUT RATHER ARE RELATED TO OUR AREA-WIDE INTERESTS. ALSO, IF AND WHEN WE MUST PAY OMANIS A PRICE FOR SOMETHING WE WANT, SUCH AS VIS-A-VIS MASIRAH OR MIDEASTFOR, WE SHOULD PAY IN ECONOMIC RATHER THAN MILITARY COIN. THE PROPER U.S. INTERNAL IMAGE HERE IS THAT OF A DEVELOPER, NOT A SOLDIER.)

6. OBTAINING OF APPROPRIATE OMANI SUPPORT ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES.

A. SOLICIT BACKING ON KEY INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AS NEED ARISES, STRESSING COMMON POLICY OBJECTIVES IN OUR DEMARCHES AND ENCOURAGING NATURAL TENDENCY TO LOOK TO SAUDI ARABIA FOR GUIDANCE. OUR APPROACHES MUST BE TIMELY TO BE EFFECTIVE.

B. MAINTAIN, AND AT LAW OF SEA CONFERENCE TIME INTENSIFY, OUR LOS DIALOGUE WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY, ESPECIALLY ON ISSUE OF INTERNATIONAL PASSAGE THROUGH STRAITS. (TO DO THIS, WILL

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REQUIRE PROMPT GUIDANCE AND FULL DESCRIPTION OF STATE-OF-PLAY FROM DEPT.)

C. URGE OMAN TO MAINTAIN ITS PREVIOUSLY HELPFUL POSITION ON KOREAN RESOLUTIONS, WHENEVER THE ISSUE REAPPEARS.

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